

**EDUCATION CENTRAL POLICY — PERTH MODERN SCHOOL**

*Motion*

**HON DONNA FARAGHER (East Metropolitan)** [1.08 pm]: I move —

That this house notes both the significant concerns being raised across the community and the lack of consultation undertaken by the McGowan government on its Education Central policy, particularly the proposed relocation of the state's only fully academically selective senior high school, currently at Perth Modern School, to a high-rise inner-city school within the Perth City Link, and calls on the government to —

- (1) reverse its Education Central policy and maintain Perth Modern School as a fully academically selective school; and
- (2) revert to the comprehensive western suburbs secondary schooling strategy announced in September 2016.

Less than 10 minutes ago, I tabled a petition signed by 6 479 concerned Western Australians. All of those signatures were collected within just three weeks. Those 6 479 people are incredibly concerned, frustrated and anxious about the McGowan government's Education Central policy and what it means for students, both now and into the future, their families and the history and traditions of Perth Modern School. Such is the depth of feeling and concern for this issue that we see signatures from right across Western Australia, from the city, north, east, south and west, to Miling and Merredin, Wyalkatchem and Albany and everywhere in between. Today they are joined by others in both the gallery and outside Parliament who also share grave concerns for this proposal. It is not only those with a very strong connection to Perth Modern School, but also others with a particular interest in schooling more generally across the western suburbs.

The motion today is not about condemning the government or the minister. Indeed, I leave those sorts of motions to Hon Sally Talbot, who is on urgent parliamentary business. Rather, it is about asking the minister, the Premier and his government to listen to the legitimate concerns of the petitioners, to listen to the students, to listen to their parents, to listen to the old Modernians and to listen to those who just want Perth Modern School left as it is—a fully academically selective senior high school in Subiaco. People want the government to listen and reverse this ill-conceived and unwelcome policy.

The minister might well say that this motion is premature and that all will be revealed soon enough. But, unfortunately, that just does not cut it. The simple fact is that we are already seeing a government and a Premier after just two months into the job saying that it will be their way—no ifs, no buts. Both the minister and the Premier have talked about consultation and a mandate. Indeed, a couple of weeks ago when I asked a direct question on which group or groups the minister had consulted on the Education Central policy prior to making the announcement on 29 January, she said —

The member will recall that in 2014, 2015 and, indeed, in 2016, Hon Ken Travers and I asked a series of questions in the house, in estimates, and I think in annual reports hearings as well, about the government's proposed ways of dealing with the pressure that was building in the western suburbs, particularly around the city side of the western suburbs. We did that and we held forums with a number of parent groups, in particular from inner-city suburbs—the inner north suburbs. We consulted a range of parents and people interested in the subject, basically from 2014 through to 2016.

What does that answer mean in a nutshell? It means that there was no consultation, or certainly not with those people with a direct interest in Perth Modern School. The Premier's response to a similar question asked on the same day in the other place is even more telling. He said —

Our consultation process was this: we published the policy two months before the state election and we were elected on the policy. That was our consultation process.

That is not consultation. Indeed, even today I read in the paper that when the Premier was again asked about it, he said Labor won and it had a mandate. That is concerning, to say the least. I would argue and accept that for some of its policies, the new Labor government can certainly take a clear position. I accept that. But to suggest that simply because the Labor Party won on 11 March that it has a mandate for every single one of its policies, including this one, which has been so roundly criticised by all and sundry since its announcement, is a bit cute, to say the least. If implemented, this policy will effectively end the traditions, ethos and heart of a school that has played such a significant and distinguished role in our state's public education system for more than 100 years. This is not something that we as Liberals can support.

What is the purpose of Education Central? I think there are a few mainly political reasons for the decision. One, of course, was simply for the Labor Party to seek to distinguish itself from the Liberal Party and the comprehensive western suburbs secondary schooling strategy that the former minister Hon Peter Collier, who is

next to me in the chamber, announced last year. We all know that there has been significant demand for places at secondary schools in the western suburbs for some time. Indeed, those of us who were in the chamber during the last term well remember speeches by the now Minister for Education in which she talked a lot about the need for forward planning, the need to end the uncertainty and the need for a decision. Indeed, this is what the now minister had been calling for. I quote again from Council *Hansard* of 14 September 2016 when Hon Sue Ellery said —

The issue is that the vast majority of parents across Western Australia are actively engaged in the education of their children and in decision-making about the education of their children. They do not wait until their children are in year 6 to make decisions about where their children will attend secondary school. They make those decisions well in advance and they make decisions about where they will buy houses or rent or move to well in advance of their children having to front up to their first day at secondary school. That is part of their frustration as well because these people want their children to go to public schools. They want their children to go to strongly performing public schools and they want to make the decision about where they live well in advance of their children's first day of year 7. They want as much information as they can possibly get to assist them with that decision.

What did the former government's strategy therefore involve? First, it involved \$88 million worth of expansion projects to increase the capacity at both Shenton College and Churchlands Senior High School. It also included a commitment to opening a new secondary college at City Beach in 2020. It would be built on the former City Beach senior high school site and would cater for 1 600 year 7 to 12 students. To make way for the new school, the International School of Western Australia would relocate to Doubleview Primary School and a brand-new primary school would be built for the existing Doubleview Primary School students. The Japanese School in Perth would also relocate to buildings at the City Beach primary school site. Other proposed changes included those relating to Carine Senior High School. I am sure that Hon Peter Collier will outline those and other elements of the strategy further when he no doubt gets the opportunity to seek speak on this motion.

It is certainly clear to me that all the decisions that centred around the then government's policy were based on sound enrolment projections and significant planning and negotiation by the then minister and the Department of Education to achieve an outcome that would appropriately address the substantial growth and demand for places in the western suburbs. With all this announced well before 11 March, I think most with an interest in this issue would have assumed—albeit now obviously it was wrong to assume—that the solution had been found and that the government would then just get on with the job of implementing the strategy. But what happened instead? A curve ball was thrown by the Labor Party on 29 January 2017, which has created the same level of uncertainty and frustration for parents and families as the minister espoused back in September last year. Indeed, I want to read part of an email that I received from one concerned parent. This parent is not connected to Perth Modern School and I indicate that I have her agreement to read this email. She states —

Labor's Education Central Policy, whilst of particular concern to the Perth Modern School Community, directly impacts all current and future public secondary school students in Perth's western suburbs and beyond—with the potential to affect student enrolments at not only Churchlands SHS and Shenton College, but also, for example, Carine, Balcatta, and Mt Lawley Senior High Schools, as well as Dianella College.

As a mother of two primary-school-aged children, currently in years three and six at Woodlands Primary School, I remain extremely alarmed that enrolments at Churchlands are projected to reach 3000 by 2019—and that we, as parents, continue to experience much angst with regards to our children's secondary schooling.

The issue of overcrowding at namely, Churchlands SHS, is one that has been acknowledged by both major political parties over the past decade—but still, as parents, we continue to be faced with uncertainty regarding our children's public secondary schooling needs in Perth's west. Last September, when the former government announced its Western Suburbs Secondary Schooling Plan, we believed a viable solution to the ever-increasing enrolment pressures in the area's two public high schools had been delivered. However, any certainty that we believed this plan had provided, was swiftly eroded when Labor finally announced its Education Central Policy in the lead up to the March State Election.

As the Hon Sue Ellery MLC, Minister for Education, rightly pointed out in Parliament, as Shadow Education Minister last year, “when parents make decisions about which secondary school they want to send their children to, they do not wait until their children get to Year 6; they make those decisions well before” that time. As parents, we made decisions about where we intended to live, over ten years ago. We put our finances on the line, in an effort to purchase a home within the local intake

area of Churchlands SHS, in order to ensure our first-born could attend that school. Accordingly, overcrowding issues that have evolved over time and remain unaddressed, as well as talk of new schools and the changing of geographic catchment areas, creates great angst and enormous pressure for us. Thousands of other families across Perth's west share our concerns and frustration.

The letter goes on to state —

This crisis cannot be permitted to continue. It requires urgent resolution. The matter of our children's education is not one that should be politicised. Decisions and solutions **MUST** be in our children's best interests—and must be based on sound research, evidence and planning. To this end, and with respect to Education Central, I ask the following:

- Using projected enrolment data, please indicate how many students will be re-directed from ... Shenton College to the proposed local intake Perth Modern High School from 2020 up until 2025.
- Presuming that Perth Modern is operating as a local intake high school from 2020, what are the projected enrolments for CSHS and Shenton College from 2020 up to and including 2025?
- In order to provide reliable data in response to the two aforementioned queries, proposed catchment areas must have been considered. Accordingly, when will the Government announce amended catchment areas for parents within all those local intake areas that will be impacted by *Education Central* ... ?
- If the relocation of ISWA and the Japanese School progress as planned, what is intended for the City Beach site?
- What is the total projected cost of Education Central—including ongoing liability for rent for the new Perth Academic College? And, in particular, how do these costs compare to the projected costs of the *Western Suburbs' Secondary Schooling Plan*?

Please provide us with the answers we seek and engage in open communication and consultation regarding a matter that impacts thousands of Western Australian children.

These are just some of the many questions that are now being asked and that we are not getting answers to. I want to turn back to the curve ball itself, otherwise known as Education Central, which was announced by the Labor Party on the eve of the election. According to the policy document, Education Central will be a purpose-built facility in the Perth City Link precinct, housing both the proposed Perth academic college and Scitech. The academically select school currently located at Perth Modern School would be relocated to the college and cater for around 1 500 students. To say that this policy has been met with alarm is an understatement. The number of letters that I have received, principally from concerned parents, is growing every day. I know the minister and her colleagues are also receiving plenty of letters, but is the government listening? Sadly, so far, it appears not. According to the government, consultation has been done, save, of course, for the only consultation that is mentioned in the policy document—that being on the final name of the school. With all due respect to the minister, this is hardly the biggest issue that is worrying the school community; it is important, but it is not everything. I want to go through a few of those concerns.

First, I refer to the location. The Premier keeps talking about improving accessibility to the school as though it is a huge problem now. The existing site is accessible. No school is always accessible in the best way that we would like it to be, but it is accessible. What about security and the safety of students leaving late from school for whatever reason or the additional congestion that will no doubt be created? Indeed, I want to refer to an excerpt of a letter I received from a parent just yesterday. Again I have permission to read this letter, which states in part —

To move our children to a proposed CBD location will have a significant impact on getting to and from school. My daughter already spends 45–90 minutes each way using public transport. Waiting with 1,500 other children to take a lift to the 16<sup>th</sup>–25<sup>th</sup> storey of a high rise will add a further 15–20 minutes to that journey. It would be compounded if I needed to drive her into the city to drop her in with a heavy instrument for music lessons. Over a quarter of the students do instrumental music, so that is well in excess of 300 students. (For example in year 8 and 9 there are 100 students in each year that do music). Many of the students in the music program are in orchestras who practice out of school hours: after school and on weekends. The number of extra of vehicles driving into the city to support just the music students' practice and concerts will have a significant impact on road congestion.

Then of course there is the height of the building. The minister is on record as saying that a decision on the height has not been made, and, to my knowledge the minister has not given a definitive figure. However, we do know that it is going to be a vertical inner-city school, and that it will be located on the top floors of the building and that separate dedicated lifts will service it. Of course, we have the artist's impression, which was included in

the policy document; all this points to a high-rise building in the centre of the city. As the saying goes, if it looks like a duck, swims like a duck and quacks like a duck, then it probably is a duck.

I know that the minister will probably say that other states are heading towards high-rise options as well. Indeed, in questions without notice last week, we learnt that the minister has visited the South Melbourne Primary School site in Ferrars Street and that a fairly large entourage also accompanied the minister to Sydney where she was briefed on the planning, design and construction of the new Parramatta primary and secondary school, Arthur Phillip. The opposition understands that in due course there will be a need for an inner-city school. We do not disagree with that, particularly, as increasing numbers of people are moving into the inner parts of the Perth metropolitan area; but, can I say that with my fairly quick reading about the schools that the minister has received either briefings on or visited the sites of, there appears to be a couple of significant differences. The most notable being that the school's play space is not confined solely to the roof as is proposed for the Education Central building. Indeed, in the case of the South Melbourne school, as well as play areas being provided at ground level, additional land has been purchased adjacent to the school to be used as a community park for both students and locals alike. There are also outdoor recreational areas, again on the ground, at the proposed Parramatta school. I understand that the design of the latter has enabled a much larger playground and a variety of outdoor spaces to be incorporated to encourage sport and other activities. It is this very issue—what a high-rise school with limited outdoor areas may mean for student's health and overall development—that is causing the most concern for parents.

I asked the minister yesterday whether the government has commissioned a health impact assessment and whether it would involve community consultation. Again, I got no answer. The answer was, according to the uncorrected *Hansard* —

As I have answered in previous questions, the government is working through all the issues associated with our election commitment about how we address the issues created by poor planning of the previous government in population growth, particularly on the city side of the western suburbs. When we are ready to make the announcement about all the elements that make up that decision, we will so do.

Again, that is not an answer to a simple question on whether a health impact assessment would be undertaken. The reality is that students should have space. They should have outdoor space, and it does not matter how old they are. We all know that in the early years of a child's life, play helps children to learn, and to build resilience and confidence in a range of other skills. In the very early years, it is very hands on. I know that simply by virtue of being a mum of a six and a four-year-old. We spend plenty of time in playgrounds and sandpits, so I get it. But while the nature of play changes as children get older, the importance of the outdoors does not. Indeed, I want to refer to the "Play Space Guide" for WA schools, which has been released by the School of Population Health at the University of Western Australia. It states —

As students transition into adolescence and high school the nature of play changes, but is still an important part of development, and older students also benefit from outdoor environments in which they can be exposed to nature, participate in physical activity, socialize with peers or undertake learning activities in a different setting.

Play spaces also foster physical movement which results in many benefits for students. According to the draft Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education paper "Movement is a powerful medium for learning through which students can acquire, practice and refine personal, interpersonal, behavioural, social and cognitive skills".

Play spaces also provide environments for students to gain two hours of physical activity per week during class time as mandated by the Department of Education in Western Australia.

Researchers from the University of Western Australia's Centre for the Built Environment and Health have summarised the evidence describing elements of a good play space. This includes creating environments that encourage physical activity, social interaction, creativity, imagination and problem solving, as well as contact and interaction with nature. Accumulating evidence points to the health and developmental benefits of contact with nature, such as improved cognitive function, increased creativity, improved interaction with adults, reduced attention deficit hyperactivity disorder symptoms and reduced rates of aggression. In summary, a good play space can achieve so much!

If the minister intends to press on with this unwelcome proposal, and we obviously hope that she does not, I ask most sincerely that the appropriate health assessment, as recommended by the Department of Health for projects such as this, be undertaken. Indeed, I want to leave the minister with comments made by one parent on this particular matter. He said —

As a parent of a year 7 girl attending perth modern school, I have a range of concerns related to the labor government Academic Central plans.

One key concern relates to a very practical and important of bringing a family up—that is “getting our kids to do the recommended physical activity”.

He goes on to say —

... her trip via the train has a very important 15-minute walk with backpack twice a day, to and fro the leederville train station. The 2.5 hours a week social and physical time is doubled to 5 hours a week as she insists on going to school 30 minutes early to socialize and play in the grounds. Remember play-dates are impractical as the kids are from all over perth.

The academic central plan will take this away. Instead she faces a direct train trip, an elevator ride to an enclosed space or rooftop. She loses one hour a day of activities which support healthy physical and mental development, this is replaced with increased sitting time, reduced green space and light exposure as well as reduced sporting activity.

He goes on to say —

If the government consulted, then the simple and practical aspects inherent in the EC proposal could be easily discovered. My concerns extent to our broader community, multiple this one hour a day, by 1500 kids for 6 years and suddenly we are talking about a public health impact.

In WA ... we already face challenges with childhood obesity, increasing diabetes, physical inactivity and suboptimal mental health. I have written to the education and health minister suggesting the health risks of EC are high, that these have not been acknowledged or evaluated, sadly I have not had replies. My view is that EC is experimental and ... I will not give my consent for her to be enrolled.

That says it all, really.

Finally, when it comes to cost, many are questioning, quite appropriately, the financial viability of the proposal, yet at the moment we are left to wonder what the true cost will be. I note that Hon Peter Collier will probably talk at length about the western suburbs strategy, but it was costed and the funding was there. Again I asked the minister a question last week about a business case or financial modelling. I asked —

- (1) Has the government completed a business case or any financial modelling for the delivery of this policy?
- (2) If yes ... will the minister table a copy; and, if not, why not?
- (3) If no ... has the minister requested that a business case be prepared and who is it being prepared by?

The response was —

- (1)–(3) Education Central is a McGowan government election commitment.

We know that.

Work is currently being undertaken between relevant agencies and the detail will go before cabinet. This information is cabinet-in-confidence.

We are left again with scant detail from the government other than what we can ascertain through the media and other means, which appears to involve some convoluted arrangement with leases and the like. I want to refer to a news article written on 30 January that states —

For the plan to go ahead, a Labor government would need to find a contractor in the private sector to build the high-rise on the government-owned land.

The \$45 million dollars would cover the initial school fitout cost of \$25 million and leasing costs up until 2021.

The state would then pay rent that Labor has estimated at \$13 million for both the school and Scitech annually, but said much of that would be offset by a subsidy the government currently paid to Scitech.

If we take just the last part of the article relating to Scitech and if we can go by what we read in the news— I accept the minister may provide more details to us throughout this debate; I am not sure whether that will happen, but we can hope—the government appears to think that it can use the funding given by the state to Scitech to help fund the lease. I am not quite sure whether Scitech would be terribly fussed with that unless, of course, the government intends to substantially increase its funding. Why? Again, in answer to questions I asked last week in this place, the government advised me of the current funding arrangements between the state government and Scitech, and this agreement is between 2013 and 2018. The total funds equate to \$41.5 million over five years and in each of the financial years it equates to around \$8 million, give or take a bit. If we go with the Labor Party’s logic, there will not be anything left for Scitech to use to continue to develop its full mission—

that is, to increase awareness, interest, capability and participation by all Western Australians in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. I do not see paying leases in any part of that mission.

Many questions are unanswered and the number is growing by the day. In concluding my remarks, I reiterate that it is the opposition's very strong view that the Education Central policy is ill-conceived, has caused unnecessary alarm and unnecessarily does away with the heritage and traditions of this fine school. Some might argue that the latter will remain irrespective of whether the selective status is removed because the school itself will remain, but a school is made up of much more than the walls of the building that encompasses it. The heritage and traditions are passed to generations of students, and they are as present today as they were when the school was first formed many years ago. We cannot forget that this concern is not shared by just those involved with Perth Modern School; it is a much broader issue than that. It covers the western suburbs more generally. The problem was solved in September last year. We simply ask that the minister steps back, takes a breath and listens—listens to the 6 479 people who signed the petition that was tabled today and to the chorus of others who have joined them in their quest to have the government's policy reversed. Some might say that in government decisions have to be made and they will not always be popular with everyone in the community, and I get that. I was the Minister for Environment and the Minister for Planning. It is a very rare day indeed when there is universal endorsement for a decision that is made. The support for this proposal is just not there. Minister—through you, Madam President—if you were to change your mind tomorrow, and I think I speak for all of us on this side of the house, we would thank and applaud you for making the right decision. Indeed, I will leave members with two letters, one of which was penned by former Labor MP Judyth Watson and appeared in the paper just a couple of days ago. It reads —

Malcolm Quekett is right to argue ... for the consideration of the heritage values of Perth Modern School and its traditions. PMS has not only been a beacon for the success of public education, but its graduates have contributed as advocates and practitioners to all public education.

Former students have been leaders not only in WA, but nationally and internationally. Each of those individuals, including myself, acknowledge that Perth Modern gave them opportunities they may not otherwise have had.

As much as they belong to the site, the school's heritage values belong to past and present students. Those men and women are being unnecessarily upset; I am certain that they would much rather work with the Government to facilitate high standards of public education to which they are committed.

I hope that the Government will compromise, leaving PMS as is, and find other better solutions to the needs of students to the north and west of Perth Modern School.

This is part of a letter that a parent sent to me just yesterday that sums up the situation most eloquently. It states —

Our family appreciates that we are fortunate to have this opportunity for our daughter to be supported to achieve her academic and all round potential by attending Perth Modern School. For her part, she works hard through doing her homework and overall commitment to learning while she is at school.

My daughter is thriving in the Perth Modern environment, where it is not just one class in a mainstream school, but an entire curriculum adapted to help students reach their potential. She is involved in much more than academic study; she also takes music, drama, sports, manual arts and debating. Over the evenings of last week, we have attended a debate, music concert and art exhibition. As well as achieving academically, I want her to develop many skills, and I also want her to be physically active during teenage years. In short, I want her to learn, but also when she goes to school I want her to be able to run around and play with her friends during recess, just like any other child at most other schools across WA.

As a parent who sees her daughter thriving at Perth Modern School, I ask that the Academic Central proposal be reconsidered. Please change the proposal to move our children out of their current superb school, into a skyscraper that does not yet exist and is likely totally unaffordable for the state. Please continue to sustain excellence in academic selective education, as already exists at Perth Modern School campus.

With that, I urge the house to support the motion.

**HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Minister for Education and Training)** [1.43 pm]:  
Mr Deputy President, can I use my first opportunity with you in the chair to congratulate you on your new position.

I acknowledge that uncertainty causes anxiety and that many of the parents of children currently at Perth Modern School are anxious to see what the government's proposal will look like for them and their children. I am

working through the issues to provide the very best model to take forward to them. It is only reasonable that people have been asking questions. This proposal is about their children and they want me to be mindful and protective of their children's welfare and, importantly, to think about the future for their children, and that is what the government is seeking to do. Our election commitments and our platform are aimed at creating a better state with a real eye to the future. Perth is a growing city and Western Australia is a growing state, and we have committed to building a new economy for a new century. Building the very best new schools and improving existing facilities is about making sure that we provide educational sites and educational venues that are the very best they can be.

The so-called western suburbs secondary school strategy developed by the previous government was problematic. The population growth on the coastal side of the western suburbs is not as rapid as has been suggested. The population growth in the western region is not down near the beach; it is on the inner eastern side of the western suburbs. That is where the infill is and that is where local government is supportive of, and is even driving, infill and growth. The CBD population is expected to grow by around 50 per cent over the next decade and the growth rates in North Perth, West Leederville, Leederville and Mt Hawthorn are in the 10 to 16 per cent range; whereas the suburbs closer to the beach are experiencing lower growth and, in the case of City Beach itself, negative growth.

There have been increasing enrolments from 2007 to 2017, and I will touch quickly on those. The student enrolment at Churchlands Senior High School in 2009 was 1 766; in 2015, it was 2 271; in 2016, it was 2 486; and in 2017, it was 2 581. The student enrolment at Shenton College in 2009 was 1 242; in 2015, it was 1 875; and in 2017, it was 1 969. Those rates are predicted to continue to grow. Without action, pressure was beginning to mount. As soon as 2020, Churchlands Senior High School is predicted to have 3 250 students, Mount Lawley Senior High School is predicted to have 1 950 and Shenton College is predicted to have 2 271. By 2025, Churchlands will be pushed to 3 852, Mount Lawley to 2 372 and Shenton College to 2 565. They are outstanding public secondary schools producing outstanding results. People might ask, "What is wrong with that?" Let us put to one side the issue of the physical capacity to fit those numbers of students onto the sites and the problems with having so many transportables. Why is it that numbers over 2 500, and closer to 3 000 or even over 3 000, are problematic? That goes to the capacity of schools to deliver and create real communities, meaningful pastoral care and the like. I want to talk a little about that.

The view from educationalists is that although the existing schools with high populations have managed them well—they are led by some of our most professional and leading school leaders and they are managing it well—it becomes increasingly difficult as enrolments beyond about 2 500 or 2 700 start to grow. Churchlands Senior High School already has three school chaplains, three school psychologists, two nurses, six program coordinators of student services and numerous other staff responsible for the wellbeing of students across the pastoral care delivery program. Coordinating an even greater number of staff and programs for an enrolment beyond 3 000 students would present significant challenges for that school. Even maintaining a school culture in which everybody at least knows everybody in their year will be difficult when those numbers are reached. The sheer size of the school will make it harder to deliver programs, because their effectiveness will become increasingly fragmented and diminished.

One of the real issues is how to ensure ongoing communication links and a chain of command with such a large number of students on a single campus. Developing the connectivity that is needed between the teams and the people for whom they are responsible, parents and students, and parents and teachers is diminished with such a large number of students on a single site. It becomes difficult for staff to have opportunities for meaningful input at staff meetings. Everything becomes fragmented because, literally, everyone cannot be put into one space. It is being organised by year group, and, therefore, the whole-of-school community relationship is broken down. The school's capacity to manage communication amongst teens on subject areas, and instructional leadership undertaken by line managers are compromised by size—it does matter.

The total number of year 7 to 12 secondary students in Perth's western suburbs is expected to grow from 6 196 in 2017 to 8 173 by 2026. Most of that growth is coming from the inner-city side of the western suburbs, closer to the CBD; it is not coming from the coastal side of the school. As a consequence, enrolments are predicted to grow, which creates serious issues. Why are we still talking about an appropriate site for the new local intake secondary school? The City Beach proposal by members opposite is not the perfect solution because it is on the wrong side of where the growth is coming from. The abject failure of an earlier Liberal government, of which Colin Barnett was the Minister for Education, was not holding onto the land of the schools that he closed along that strip in the western suburbs, which cut off options for future governments, including the next one of which he was a member.

**Hon Peter Collier** interjected.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I made a point of listening in silence to every word the member spoke. I asked my colleagues to make sure that we listened to every word that was put because this is an important debate. I am going to ask that the member gives me the same courtesy in return.

**Hon Peter Collier** interjected.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT:** Order! The minister has clearly indicated that she is not interested in interjections. The mover of the motion was heard in respectful silence, and that is what is going to happen with the minister. Minister, please resume.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** Thank you very much, Mr Deputy President. It is also important to touch on the issue of what Perth Modern School has been and what it is now. It was established as the first government secondary school in 1911. Its charter was to offer a modern education to students of strong academic ability. Selection was by scholarship and both male and female students studied science and modern languages as part of their course, which of itself was important because it was the first time that female students were able to study the full range of courses. Throughout the years the school has developed a very strong reputation based on the achievement of high educational standards and the successes of past students. In 1958, Perth Modern School's status changed from being a version of a select school to a comprehensive school. In today's language, it shifted from being a select school to a local intake public secondary school, open to local students whatever their academic prowess. In 1968, the special music scholarship was established. The intensive English centre was established in the school in 1983, and this provided for those students who had recently arrived in Western Australia from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. In 1999, as one of the outcomes of the projected closure of Swanbourne Senior High School, the school entered into a partnership with The Graduate College of Dance to provide a specialist ballet program on the site.

In 2000 there was a Senate inquiry into the education of gifted students that produced a range of findings. I am advised that Western Australia made a submission to that Senate inquiry. As a consequence of the Senate findings, the Western Australian government acknowledged the importance of fully selective schooling and gathered educational evidence around establishing a select secondary school. In February 2005, the then Premier, Geoff Gallop, announced that Perth Modern School would become WA's only completely select status secondary school. What happened to the existing school? The gifted and talented music program was phased out and Perth Modern School returned to being an academic select school in 2007 with a year 8 cohort. The school commenced as a fully select school for years 8 to 12 students in 2011. Today, in 2016, it has an enrolment of some 1 381 students from years 7 to 12. The interesting thing to note is that far more students apply to get into the academic select program at Perth Modern School than it can currently take. To get into that fully academic select school, students need to demonstrate a high level of academic excellence. They apply for a position and sit a selective entrance test in about March every year. Tests are conducted on all academic languages and arts subjects. The selective test covers four components: reading comprehension; communication of ideas in writing; and quantitative and abstract reasoning. Three of those four tests are made up of multiple-choice questions. The writing task itself presents the applicant with a prompt and then students can write in any genre, unlike the National Assessment Program — Literacy and Numeracy, as long as it references the prompt. The answer is assessed for creativity and originality with an appropriate rubric, unlike NAPLAN, to measure the outcome. Those students who apply really do have to demonstrate they are able to not only retain information, but also be creative. These students really are the best and the brightest, and that is what it takes to get into that fully academic select school. It is worth making the point that a number of public secondary schools have really strong and extensive academic select components. For example, we could say that John Curtin College of the Arts is the next closest to being completely academic select, but it still retains a small component of local intake. Willetton Senior High School and Rossmoyne Senior High School have a very strong academic select component but also much larger local intake provisions.

It is an interesting exercise to look at the number of students who applied this year and see how many put Perth Modern School as their first preference. In March, which was two months after the policy was announced that the site of the only academic select school in Perth would change if a Labor government were elected, students sat the entrance test. A greater number of students applied to get into Perth Modern School this year than over the last four or five years. In 2015, 1 326 students sat the test and indicated that Perth Modern School was their first preference. In 2016—to start in 2017—1 370 applied for Perth Modern School as their first preference. In March this year, two months after the announcement of the Labor policy that the site might change, 1 544 students applied and put Perth Modern School as their first preference. Why is that important? It is important to note that an additional 175 students sat the test than last year, and that was 218 more than the year before. Across Western Australia, parents were not voting with their feet and saying, "We don't want a part of the new fully academically select school." That is not what was happening. It indicated that the work done by Perth Modern School as WA's only fully academically select school was attractive to more parents in Western Australia than previously, irrespective of where that school was going to conduct its work. Those are

important numbers to keep in mind. That does not take away from how I started my speech. I understand that uncertainty causes anxiety and that the parents of students at Perth Mod now want certainty. I understand that, and I am working as fast as I can, as effectively as I can, to provide them with that certainty as quickly as I can.

It is also important in this debate to talk about what academic select is, because there are different points of view about fully select schools versus trying to improve what we do for gifted and talented children in every classroom. There is a spectrum of views about that and it is important to put my view, and the view of this government, on the record, because some of those who oppose the government's policy suggest that our motivation for that is that we do not support academic select schools and that we have an issue with fully academically select public secondary schools. That is not the case. That is not my view; that is not the view of the McGowan government. All students deserve the opportunity to achieve the highest standards of learning possible so that they are equipped to deal effectively with the opportunities and the challenges that they face. Exceptionally able students have different learning needs from those of other children. These students benefit, educationally and psychologically, from being involved in educational programs with other similarly able students. In the course of this discussion I have heard many parents say to me that the very first time their child came home after a day at school and was happy about what had happened during their school day was when they were at Perth Mod, surrounded by their peers. I take absolutely no issue with that. I recognise that academic select schools serve a very important purpose and make sure that we treat our brightest and our best in a way that is going to enable them to flourish. We should not assume, which some people do—this was put to me by some parents of exceptionally gifted and talented children—that because these students are academically ahead of their age peers, we just need to accelerate them a bit and give them additional opportunities to learn and that the social environment has no bearing on them. For many of those children, the social environment is far worse for them—they stand out because they are so exceptionally gifted and talented.

I do not want people to assume that our position is that academic select students should not be getting a differentiated kind of education. That is not our position. The argument, folks, is about the site. It is not about whether academically select schools are good or bad. I support them. That is not the position of every other jurisdiction. Some people will remember that in 2011, I think, the Victorian Parliament undertook an inquiry into gifted and talented education in its state. The government responded in due course. The government's response, as I have read it, was, "We think we need to do better in every classroom to make sure that gifted and talented children get the very best education." I would not disagree with that; I think that as well. However, I go one step further and say that we have to recognise the benefit of fully academic select schools and we have to continue to provide them. We have only one completely academic select school right now in Western Australia; I think we need more. When a number of people have come to see me about this issue, I have said that. I actually think we need more. New South Wales has 13 or 18 or something like that. We need more. This is not an argument about a Labor government not supporting the very best educational environment for those children who are exceptionally gifted and talented. It just is not. Secondary selective entrance programs that cater for students with exceptional academic languages and arts abilities and offer the learning environment, differentiated curriculum and expert teaching that these students require is sound policy, and we support it and will ensure that it continues.

I touched on the Victorian situation. I share the view that all gifted and talented children in Western Australia should, as much as it is possible within their classroom, get differentiated learning and acceleration and extension opportunities, but we need to do more in every classroom. We also need to continue to have academically select programs and, where we can do it, we need to have fully academically select programs. I do not share the view that this is somehow a policy that is about reducing opportunities for gifted and talented children. As I said, the argument is about the site. That is the argument. It is not about the fantastic work that has been done, and will continue to be done, in WA's only fully academically select school, wherever it is. Victoria has four selective entry schools and New South Wales has 17 fully selective secondary schools. Queensland has a version of an academy in years 10 to 12 for gifted and talented children. South Australia has three public high schools that provide accelerated learning. However, I reckon it is New South Wales with 17 fully select schools and then WA with one fully academically select school, and a few variations with high levels of academic select.

It is also the case that over the last few years there has been a growth of planning and development of inner urban government high schools. That has come about as a result of choices that people are making about where they live, including more and more people choosing to live and work and raise families in the inner parts of our cities. The development of government schools is also built on the back of a history of a number of private schools running, developing and building schools in inner urban areas and managing all the things that go with that, including transport, traffic flows and being in the city after dark to attend extracurricular activities. Schools have been doing that in private education in cities around Australia for many, many years.

I want to touch on what our policy is not. It is not about abolishing or dumping the policy that fully academically select schools are the appropriate way to ensure highly gifted and talented students thrive. It is not about knocking

down, destroying or trashing the Perth Modern School site. It is not about putting our brightest and our best in a prison. It is not about designing a school to be dangerous or a safety risk. The proposition was put that the government was designing a school to be dangerous. It is not about trashing the achievements of the last 10 years of Perth Modern School or, indeed, of the whole history of Perth Modern School. It is not an attack on the western suburbs. It is not a perversion of class warfare. It is not an attack on the elite. I have never used the word “elite”, although, frankly, I think we should be loud and proud if people do want to use that word in a positive sense. I have never used that word, but I am being accused of mounting some kind of attack on the elite.

**Hon Donna Faragher:** Not by me.

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** No, I do not suggest that, but there are lots of points of view, honourable member, that have been put to me.

This is not a debate about destroying or abolishing a very successful fully academic school, although some would seek to frame it that way. It is a debate about whether there is only one site in this state that is capable of providing the best education for our brightest and our best. Even with all the debate and controversy, if people want to call it that, about this project, there are still parents and students who want to go to our state’s fully academically select state school, wherever it is.

We will announce our plans soon. We will give certainty to parents. We will consult on how plans can be implemented. In a constrained economic environment created by the appalling financial management, if one can call it that, of the previous government, this is about addressing the real enrolment pressures at a number of public secondary schools that were allowed to build up their enrolments to an unsustainable level. It is about ensuring that our brightest and best have the best learning environment.

**HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan — Leader of the Opposition)** [2.12 pm]: Thank you, Mr Deputy President, and I would also like to congratulate you on your new position.

It gives me a great deal of pleasure to stand up and support this motion. It is a motion that I feel very strongly and personally about. I generally have a good working relationship with Hon Sue Ellery and I like to think I will continue to do so. There are only two occasions I can remember that I have vehemently opposed any decision she has made. One was personal, on a motion she moved when I had just become Leader of the Government in this place—I will not reflect on that. I think members will remember that I lost a lot of respect for her over that. The second time is the Education Central policy. This is the worst decision she has ever made and shall ever make as Minister for Education and Training—without a shadow of a doubt. It is completely without foundation, without consultation and without justification. It is completely unnecessary. I urge the honourable member to eat some humble pie and acknowledge she got it wrong and change her decision.

I will briefly address a couple of comments the minister has made. Firstly, with regard to the size of schools and pastoral care, that is without question; that is no-brainer stuff. We all know and understand that. Having a school with larger numbers is not necessarily a bad thing for subject choices et cetera, but then of course, yes, issues do arise with pastoral care and care of the child. Fundamentally, any education system must do what is best for the child. We always do that. Across this chamber, we will always do that.

I think the minister’s second point, about the sale of land, was an own goal. She might like to have a look at who sold that land in Scarborough and City Beach.

**Hon Alannah MacTiernan** interjected.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** What is that? I think members might find that it was one of our newest members who sold the Scarborough land for \$15 million. As for City Beach, we did not sell it. The state still has that land, and that is part of our solution. The argument about that is without foundation. The argument is straight out of the water and does not work.

Of course the numbers at Perth Modern School went up. The school has just won the Beazley Medal for the third time in three years. It is one of the best academic schools in this nation and globally. Of course people want to go to Perth Mod. When did applications close? It was on 6 February. In six days, did a multitude of people all of a sudden see the multistorey building that the Labor Party was going to build and say, “Oh, I’m going to go and be a part of that!” Of course not. The reason they want to go to Perth Mod is because of the history of that school, the heritage of that school and the success of that school. It is not because the Labor Party decided that it would build a multistorey building and chuck everyone on the 15<sup>th</sup> floor so they could abseil for sport. That is not why it is doing it.

When we on this side of the chamber were in government, we did a lot more consultation than the mob opposite will ever do. I would like to point out a couple of things about education. The Liberal–National government faced a multitude of issues on the secondary education level and on each and every occasion we consulted extensively with the community. Let us just have a look at a few of the examples. Freo—that bastion of

conservatism—“Those terrible Tories. Should we worry about them?” Of course not. What did we do when we looked at Hamilton Senior High School? What did we do when we looked at South Fremantle Senior High School, which was depleted in numbers? Did we give up on them and say, “It doesn’t matter; it’s not a winnable seat. We don’t care about them”? Of course not. In May 2014, the then Premier and I had a meeting in Fremantle Town Hall with 200 or 300 people and consulted through surveys with every feeder school in the electorate. I consulted with every primary school and every secondary school in that community and asked them what they wanted. They said they wanted a school that provided quality education for vocational education and training and quality education on the academic front. Our government did not impose a decision on those schools; we consulted with those communities and included the local member, Simone McGurk, who was part of the process. In December 2014, I announced the establishment of Fremantle College. At a cost of \$31 million, that new school will open next year. It is a state-of-the-art academic facility in the heart of Fremantle. And those terrible Tories did it. What a great thing.

Armadale is another bastion of conservatism. Did we worry about that? When was the last time people saw a Liberal member down there in Armadale? Never—right? The academic problems in Armadale were profound. Armadale Senior High School was a great school, although its numbers were depleted. Cecil Andrews Senior High School was a great school. We went down there to have a look to see whether we could resolve it. We did exactly the same thing as we did in Fremantle. We held a public meeting at the Armadale Town Hall and put out a survey to all the students of all the feeder schools and asked them what they wanted for their education. We listened to them and then provided \$11 million on upgrades. I visited the school just before the election and took with me the great local member for Armadale, Tony Buti. What a great man he is. I cannot work out for the life of me how he has not been elevated in the Labor Party. We then said that we would do what the people of Armadale wanted. I opened a magnificent new state-of-the-art hospitality centre and also a design and technology area there. The upgrade is magnificent and it will elevate Armadale Senior High School. In addition to that, a magnificent new science, technology, engineering and mathematics centre was built at Cecil Andrews. Members should have a look at it. It is magnificent. Again, we listened to the community. We asked the community what it wanted. It was not the gospel according to Pete; we asked the community members what they wanted and we gave it to them.

In Kalgoorlie, my home town, I desperately wanted to amalgamate the two schools there. I still think Kalgoorlie–Boulder Community High School as a standalone year 7 through to year 10 facility and a separate Eastern Goldfields College is the wrong way to go. I think many of the behavioural issues at the community high school emanate from the fact that there is not the leadership support at the senior secondary level. In addition to that, any academic on the face of the earth who knows what they are talking about will tell you that the fewer transition points there are in a child’s life, the better. That is why I would prefer to have it that way. But we listened to the community. I held a community meeting up there and surveyed all the primary schools. I visited every primary school in Kalgoorlie, both government and non-government schools, and gave them what they wanted—a magnificent new \$45 million state-of-the-art school in Kalgoorlie–Boulder Community High School. That is another challenge for the current minister. She might like to look at that. I still think that ultimately the best thing to do up there would be to amalgamate those two schools. However, as I said, we listened to the community, because when it comes to education, the parents, the community and the entire area must be part of the decision-making process. Those terrible Tories who do not listen!

In Geraldton there was another split campus with John Willcock College and Geraldton Senior High School. There was enormous dissent over what was the best way to address that. John Willcock was haemorrhaging, many of the students were leaving, and many of the students, particularly at the senior secondary level, were going to the grammar school up there. We went up there and had a public meeting, yet again. We surveyed all the schools and went to all the primary and secondary schools. I did what I should do as a minister. I consulted with the community to find out what was best. We had a look at it and I made the decision based upon all that information. We allocated \$25 million for two discrete schools for students in years 7 to 12. We changed the boundaries to ensure that there was a good cross-section of the community in both schools.

**Hon Darren West:** That’s what it used to be.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I beg your pardon.

**Hon Darren West:** That’s what it was originally.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Exactly! But we have added \$25 million to enhance the facilities up there.

I did not get one iota of opposition to that—not one! I was applauded for it. I even went to the union and they clapped for me. I could not believe it.

**Hon Donna Faragher** interjected.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Absolutely.

I spoke to the union. I have always had good relations with the union. Do not get me wrong about that. I am saying, again, that I consulted. There is one other area—I did not quite get this part of the jigsaw done—down in Mandurah. The minister has to fix that area down in Mandurah. That split campus school down there, John Tonkin College, is not working. I had a public meeting and we did a survey. There was overwhelming consensus for the amalgamation of those two schools. Hon David Templeman came with me toward the end of last year. I said to him at the time, “Whoever wins next year, mate, we’ve got to fix this up.” It is in the minister’s hands. All the consultation has been done and I like to think that she will do something about it.

I will come to the biggest headache that I had for the entire magnificent time that I was Minister for Education and Training. One of the greatest privileges in life, I can tell members, is to be the education minister in Western Australia. We had issues in the western suburbs. There is no use blaming anyone. They were caused by a combination of both parties. Wrong decisions were made in the 1990s and the early part of the 2000s by both Liberal and Labor governments in closing the four schools: Swanbourne Senior High School, Scarborough Senior High School, Hollywood Senior High School and City Beach Senior High School. We kept the City Beach site but the other three were sold off. We replaced them with one school in Shenton Park. Inevitably, there were going to be population pressures, and that came to bite us on the backside from the community. Those population shifts emerged, particularly in the western suburbs, and they are continuing to grow. There is the infill at Floreat, which I am not too keen on, I have to say, but at least it is there. There are population pressures all the way through Wembley, Churchlands and the western suburbs. There are massive population pressures. There are a host of reasons. The independent public school system has ensured that the status of and community involvement in those schools has been elevated. Additionally, in most instances the schools are now academically as good as, and in a lot of instances even better than, those in the non-government sector. Why would parents pay \$30 000 a year to send their children to a private school when they can go to Shenton College or Churchlands Senior High School and get a quality education? That is why a lot of parents voted with their feet. They decided that they were going to, more than ever, support the government sector. The jewel in the crown is Perth Modern School. It is the epitome of what an academically selective and academically successful school should be. It is all of the above. It is a magnificent educational facility. If members go past it, they will see that it oozes class and educational excellence. And these guys want to destroy it!

Several members interjected.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I copped it from the Leader of the House for opening my mouth, so if you don’t mind. With that in mind, the Liberal Party said we should determine what we were going to do. We did an enormous amount. We consulted right throughout the western suburbs over the next two years.

Several members interjected.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** No, members opposite have not learned either. When we get a direction from the Chair, we keep our mouths shut.

We consulted right throughout the western suburbs and throughout the community. We consulted with the Town of Cambridge, the International School of Western Australia, the Department of Planning, Landgate, the Office of the Environmental Protection Authority, the Department of Health, Main Roads Western Australia, the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority, the Japanese School, Hyogo Prefecture, the City of Stirling, Doubleview Primary School, City Beach Primary School and members of Parliament. The member for Perth had four public forums, all of which I attended. The member for Churchlands did a survey right throughout his community. I visited every school, including every secondary school. I consulted widely to ensure that we got it right. As I said, it was not going to be the gospel according to Pete. I was not going to come along and tell the western suburbs, Perth Modern School, Shenton College and Churchlands Senior High School what was good for them. We consulted to find the best outcome. At that stage I had, and I am sure the current minister still has, the best department in the entire government of Western Australia in the Department of Education. It is a magnificent department. It forensically went about its business and came up with some options. I announced those options at the end of 2015 to seek community advice and community support. The department came up with a number of options including the Skyline drive-in site and the old City Beach Senior High School site. The Skyline drive-in has been closed for a number of years but it is an A-class reserve so it cannot be used. Using it would have required an enormous amount of shift and change in environmental approvals. I do not know why; it is just undulated cement. Anyway, it is an A-class reserve. It could have been done but, quite frankly, it would have taken years. We looked at the City Beach Senior High School site and at vacant land near Fred Burton Park, on the corner of The Boulevard and West Coast Highway, and on the corner of Rochdale Road and Wollaston Road.

Again, we talked to the community, the Town of Cambridge, the local schools and the parents. Every time I went to the schools I met with the boards and the parents and citizens associations. Without a doubt, unanimously, there was the overwhelming consensus that another school was needed in the western suburbs. That was

a no-brainer. Nobody needed a PhD to work that one out. We were mindful of the fact that we could have a shortage of around 4 000 students by 2026 or a little bit later than that. We could have built a multi-storey school in Churchlands or in Shenton Park or taken the old City Beach site, which is Education land, or one of the other sites, built another school and changed the boundaries accordingly. We looked at it and spent an enormous amount of time coming to a decision. The department, through consultation—we did not impose a decision—came up with a solution. I made that announcement in September last year. I want to make it perfectly clear to everyone that there is no problem. The problem of overcrowding in the western suburbs has been resolved. The Liberal government did it. The changeover of government is always a difficult process, but I know that we handed a Rolls Royce education system to the government. The western suburbs problem had been resolved, so that is one issue the government does not have. Hon Donna Faragher has already commented on this but I will go through a few things. Firstly, we allocated \$182 million. That is big bickies in anyone's language. It is in the forward estimates. The government will not have to pay another cent. It is in the forward estimates so the government does not have to worry about —

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT:** Order! The Leader of the Opposition is addressing the Chair.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Shenton College will receive \$50 million and Churchlands Senior High School will receive \$40 million. That \$90 million will create an additional 1 750 places. That would partly resolve the issue. It will not do it all, but it will partly resolve it. We need a new school and we have the land in City Beach. Why do we not use that for a new school? It will provide an avenue for another 1 600 students. We allocated \$84 million for the new school for year 7 students, which will be completed by 2020. Problem solved! Wait on, we still had a bit of a problem because the International School of Western Australia and the Japanese School were both there. No worries, because six months down the track, after a lot of ferocious negotiation—I got deeply involved in that, I can assure members—we made sure we got it right. We reached a very amicable agreement with the International School of Western Australia. It would move to a very large Doubleview site and have a complete renovation with like-for-like facilities. We would rebuild and create a completely new school for Doubleview Primary School on the same site with plenty of room and that would have freed up the City Beach site, except for the Japanese School. The Japanese School is fine. We reached a very amicable decision with the Japanese School that it would move to City Beach Primary School. The Japanese School is very happy with that. There is plenty of room there for everyone. They are all living in great harmony.

Collectively, it was going to cost \$18.6 million for the renovation of Doubleview Primary School to suit the International School of Western Australia, and \$15.4 million for a new primary school at Doubleview. They are over the moon. They will get a brand new school. The Japanese school will go to City Beach Senior High School, with \$3.6 million for a renovation of that school. They are also over the moon.

But we needed more—there is even more! As I have said, it does not work with just that small component of the tapestry. Remember, Shenton College has had an extension; Churchlands Senior High School has been fixed up, with a new secondary school; ISWA has moved to Doubleview; and the Japanese School has moved to City Beach Primary School. It was starting to come together. I was starting to get excited by about midway through last year that after 20 years we had finally got to the point at which the western suburbs tapestry was coming together.

However, we had another issue as a result of the changes to the boundaries and the closure of those schools in the western suburbs. Therefore, the decision was made to open the boundaries for Carine Senior High School. Effectively, 400 students who live north of Scarborough Beach Road go to Churchlands Senior High School rather than Carine Senior High School. Carine Senior High School is a very good school. We made that part of the tapestry. We allocated \$18.7 million to make Carine Senior High School an academically select school specialising in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. After the current cohort of students have gone through that school, the change to the boundaries will ensure that students who live north of Scarborough Beach Road will go to Carine Senior High School. That is only sensible. In addition, we need significant upgrades to Mount Lawley Senior High School. That is why we announced during the election campaign \$39 million to enable an additional 600 students to attend Mount Lawley Senior High School. That is a massive expansion of that school.

There is even more, Mr Acting President. I think this is your first day in the chair, is it not, Mr Acting President?

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Robin Chapple):** This is my first day, yes.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Congratulations, and good to have you there.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT:** Thank you very much.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** In addition, we allocated \$60 million for a complete rebuild of Balcatta Senior High School. That is a lot of money and a lot of schools. I think members get the picture. This was not just plucked out of the air. We did not just decide overnight that this is how we would solve the education issue in the western suburbs. This took well over two years to determine. It involved considerable consultation with all areas of the community. It was embraced unanimously by all members of the community. People who had been hounding me down at my door to do something about schools in the western suburbs were now writing to me and saying that this was a good solution. Everyone was happy. I am painting a picture here. We created a tapestry. It took a long time. However, we all worked together and we were all part of the thread, and there it was.

Do members know what? In creating that tapestry, Perth Modern School was not touched. I did have one thing in mind for Perth Modern School. This is a personal thing, and Treasury used to tell me where to go because Treasury hates any person who is an education minister. I wanted the old Telethon Kids Institute site to become a science hub for Perth Modern School. Ideally, had things gone our way in the election, I would have fought for that in our next term of government. However, we cannot do that anymore because Perth Modern School will no longer exist.

That is the Liberal way of doing things. Our government was not so arrogant as to assume that we knew what was best for the local community. On each and every occasion—at Fremantle, Armadale, Geraldton and Kalgoorlie, and in the western suburbs, and we also need to add Mandurah, because Mandurah is part of this—we did not just say, “It’s our way or the highway.” We were not so arrogant as to say, “This is what we are doing, and we are going to do it whether you like it or not, and we’ll consult afterwards.” We always, on every single occasion, consulted the community. On every single occasion, we brought the community with us. That is because we were dealing with the education of children. We were dealing with the welfare of children and with how to best prepare them for life post compulsory education. That is why it is vital that every education minister listens to the community. I can tell members right now that the role of Minister for Education is very fluid, and it should never, ever be taken for granted. When a Minister for Education makes a decision on education that impacts on children, that minister may be out of that role in four or five years. However, the implications of that minister’s decision are profound.

I have been a lifelong educator. All I ever wanted to do was be a chalkie and Minister for Education. I have had 23 years in the classroom. I have also been Minister for Education. I can tell members right now that my motivation on this issue has nothing to do with being a former Minister for Education. It has everything to do with being an educationalist. I know what is best for education in that instance, and that is to never, ever involve politics—a political decision—with education. However, that is exactly what has happened with Perth Modern School.

Let us look now at the Labor way with education. In politics, quite frankly, every single departing government is labelled with the word “arrogant”. It usually takes a government one term to be labelled with that word. If we go through past governments, state, federal and international, they are always referred to as arrogant. That is particularly the case from the opposition. We used to do that when I was first in opposition. These guys opposite have done it over the past four years. They called our government arrogant. They said we were not listening. That word becomes a cliché that just rolls off the tongue. It is called government. It is called opposition.

It is usually the case, as I said, that after a government has been in office for about one term, it becomes arrogant in the eyes of not just the opposition, but also the community and the media. However, these guys opposite have reached a new record. They became arrogant before they were even elected to government! I have not seen that happen before. They became arrogant on 29 January 2017. The reason they became arrogant is that they decided what would be best for Perth Modern School. They decided what would be best for western suburbs education. They did not consult on Perth Modern School. I will go through that again in a minute. Hon Donna Faragher has very articulately outlined why that puts paid to the notion of consultation. This government became arrogant even before it was elected.

On 29 January, the Labor Party released a document titled “WA Labor Education Central”. I remember that day vividly. I was having a glass of white wine on the night of Saturday, 28 January, and my media adviser rang me and said, “Minister, you’d better get ready for the media tomorrow.” When I asked him what for, he said, “Haven’t you seen the front page of *The Sunday Times*?” The Labor Party did not even bother to let anyone know. It did not bother to let the community know. It decided that it would get this thing on the front page of *The Sunday Times*. We saw on the front page of *The Sunday Times* this magnificent creature—a picture of a 20-storey building called Education Central! That is the Labor Party’s Education Central policy. That is the policy that the Labor Party has purportedly been discussing and consulting on with the community for the previous two years. I would love to know one parent group or one school board that the now Minister for Education consulted on this issue. I would love to know one. I challenge the Minister for Education, through you, Mr Acting President, to name one group to which she showed that picture and asked them whether they liked it. I challenge the minister to do that—one! I can tell the minister right now that they would have absolutely

said no, they do not like it. That is arrogance—to put that on the front page of *The Sunday Times*. The Labor Party then engaged in the nonsense of saying it has a mandate! Give me a break!

I turn now to what this document states. This is a pearler of a document. It states in part —

The McGowan Labor Government will build Education Central near Yagan Square in the Perth City Link Precinct. During the construction phase of Education Central 500 new jobs will be created.

That fits into the Labor Party's mantra for the election campaign. It continues —

The building will incorporate sustainable design features and focus on energy and water efficiency and will achieve design excellence in environment sustainability.

It does not state anything about children or educational welfare.

[Interruption from the gallery.]

**The ACTING PRESIDENT:** I remind the people in the gallery that applause is not appreciated. Thank you very much indeed.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I really appreciated it!

**The ACTING PRESIDENT:** I know.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Thank you, Mr Acting President. I apologise.

It refers to 16 storeys. The current Minister for Education reckons that the government has not determined the make-up of Education Central. With all due respect, that is almost fraudulent. If the government is putting this out here like this, it has to assume that the public—because they voted on this issue and we lost government because of this issue, apparently—voted on this issue and now the government has the audacity to say that it has not made up its mind and it is still working on it. Rubbish! Here it is here. This is it.

**Hon Simon O'Brien:** How could *The Sunday Times* be wrong?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** That is right. *The Sunday Times* could not get that wrong. The policy states that key features include indoor sports facilities. That is wonderful. Students can play badminton, but they can still do that in the gymnasium at Perth Mod, because I promise members that I gave the money for that gymnasium.

Several members interjected.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I did, guys. I gave it that money.

**Hon Stephen Dawson:** Out of your pocket?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** We had a couple of cake stalls. This is a good one. Members will love this key feature —

Outdoor playing and learning space on the roof

I reckon that will be great! Do members believe that? As I said earlier, the government is obviously going to introduce abseiling into Perth Mod. How the building will be big enough for an outdoor playing area is beyond me. This is really good —

Dedicated secure lifts to access the school

That will be wonderful when there are 1 500 kids and the fire alarm goes off. I am sorry to be so flippant, but this is just a crock. This is just nonsense. I said that this is rubbish because this is the policy that the government keeps throwing in our face and saying that it went to the election with and was elected on. I challenge anyone to show someone this policy and ask them whether they chose to vote Labor because of it. I challenge members.

**Hon Darren West** interjected.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** No, you will get your go, mate. As I said, I have limited time.

That is that one. The government told the community about this policy. I have been in this game a long time. I have been in politics all my life and I know that sometimes I can be wrong. In this instance, I genuinely think I am not wrong, but I thought: perhaps I am wrong. Perhaps the Labor Party did consult. I am pretty sure that as Minister for Education I might have heard about it, but the first I heard about it was, as I said, when I was having a white wine on the twenty-eighth and reading *The Sunday Times*. Let us look. We asked the Premier and the minister how much consultation they did. I am going to repeat what Hon Donna Faragher said because, quite frankly, I found these responses offensive. Our mob in the other place asked the Premier about consultation. He said —

Our Education Central model is about creating a school that is larger —

Really? He continued —

with more opportunities for more students, in a location that suits far more people and that is far easier to get to.

We could not make up this stuff. The Premier said —

It is also about making sure that people of the inner city—Perth, Mt Hawthorn, Mt Lawley, North Perth, Nedlands, Subiaco and the like—have the opportunity to access a local school in proximity to where they live. Our consultation process was this:

This is arrogant. I will repeat it. The Premier, talking about Perth Mod, stated —

Our consultation process was this: we published the policy two months before the state election and we were elected on the policy. That was our consultation process. Prior to that I had a meeting with local parents about all those issues with the now Minister for Education, and she had a range of meetings and conversations with local people. What the opposition has to understand is that we put a policy out to the people of Western Australia. We did not hide it—it was on the front page of *The Sunday Times*. We campaigned on it. Members opposite might not have noticed, but it was on the front page of *The Sunday Times*. We campaigned on it and we were elected on it. It is a good policy.

The Premier of Western Australia honestly thinks that his mob was elected because of the Perth Mod policy. I will tell members what! Then we also asked Hon Sue Ellery, the current Minister for Education and Training, and her response was —

I thank the member for her question.

The member will recall that in 2014, 2015 and, indeed, in 2016, Hon Ken Travers and I asked a series of questions in the house, in estimates, and I think in annual reports hearings as well, about the government's proposed ways of dealing with the pressure that was building in the western suburbs, particularly around the city side of the western suburbs. We did that and we held forums with a number of parent groups, in particular from inner-city suburbs—the inner north suburbs. We consulted a range of parents and people interested in the subject, basically from 2014 through to 2016.

Again, I challenge the Minister for Education and Training—I do not mind one little interjection—to say whether on any one occasion she ever, ever flouted the notion of a high-rise building in the City of Perth and to decimate Perth Modern School. Did she?

**Hon Sue Ellery:** I do not accept the premise of what you have just put to me.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Did you ever mention the high-rise building?

**Hon Sue Ellery:** To whom?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** To all these parent groups with whom you met.

**Hon Sue Ellery:** Of course we did.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** The minister mentioned a high-rise building?

**Hon Sue Ellery:** Don't you remember —

**The ACTING PRESIDENT:** Members! No discussion across the chamber. Direct your comments to the Chair.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Good. Thank you. That is a very good ruling. I have so much to get through. I must contain myself. Anyway, after the election, lo and behold, very few people in the community seemed to know about it. In fact, no-one seemed to know about it. Logically, a lot of people got very, very angry about it—not only about the policy but also that it was inflicted upon them. Apparently, the decision was made and that won the government the election. When former Governor Malcolm McCusker had the audacity to give his point of view, the response from the Minister for Education and Training was —

... the new school would have outdoor spaces, an auditorium and modern science facilities and would continue to produce outstanding results. "While I can appreciate Mr McCusker's right to express his opposition to a decision to relocate a school, I do find it offensive that he or anyone would suggest that this Government would put students' health or safety at risk ...

The minister finds it offensive that the former Governor can have an opinion that disagrees with hers. As I said, arrogance has already set in. I am not going to read through all this again, but the current Premier carried on about how he had a mandate for Perth Mod because he took it to the election. Guys, we got it wrong. I take one for the team. I am really sorry. It was not Western Power, Roe 8, the "it's time" factor, arrogance or leadership; it was Perth Modern School. Perth Mod cost us the election. I cannot believe that I did not pick that up! I was the minister for four and a half years and I got it wrong. I apologise to Liberal Party members. If we could re-run the

election campaign, I would go along with that Perth Modern policy just so that we could win government! What a crock. That is an absolute load of nonsense. It is an absolute disgrace for anyone opposite to even suggest that Perth Modern School was even an issue, let alone that it won them government. Members opposite have no respect for this institution of the public of Western Australia at all. It is absolutely disgraceful.

Hon Sue Ellery made a great fanfare about having people in the public gallery in September last year during the education debate. Hon Donna Faragher has already been through this. Hon Sue Ellery said —

In the gallery today are parents of students who attend a number of schools in the western suburbs and the inner western suburbs of Perth. Some of them are part of a Facebook group called “We Need a High School”. The issues that those parents face, which I want to touch on in my comments today, are about the capacity of existing schools, poor planning for future schools, and their aspirations and frustrations, I guess, as parents of students who attend overcrowded schools in our inner-city areas and in the western suburbs in particular. These are not the only parents whom I have had conversations with about these kinds of concerns. Parents in those inner-city areas where density is increasing have real issues. Many of those schools are very old. Some of the first schools built in the state are in those inner-city suburbs. They are on much smaller land footprints than the land footprints that we make for schools that we build in 2016. Those old schools are at capacity.

I can tell members that the footprint of the planned new Perth Mod is a lot smaller. Hon Sue Ellery continued —

Many of them are overcrowded. The parents want real solutions to these schools.

I provided a solution to those parents—there were about four or five solutions—and I would like to think that some of them are here again today. They were happy with the solutions I provided, but that did not include decimating Perth Modern School.

Hon Sue Ellery then went on to state —

I wanted to talk about another group of parents—to a certain degree, there is some overlap—who wrote to me and the Minister for Education in August. These are parents from the inner-city area where there is higher density. The letter is signed by eight parent representatives on school boards. It is about a schools planning forum in August 2016 and states —

On behalf of the School Boards and P&C’s of the signatory schools below, we would like to invite you to participate in the Schools Planning Forum to be held in August 2016.

The letter Hon Sue Ellery quoted goes on to state that parents believed as a result of the discussions —

a two-pronged approach is required to deal with the secondary school problem. The first, a short term solution, would see the opening of a City Beach (or nearby) secondary school along the original time frame of 2019/2020. The second, a long term solution, would see a new inner city secondary school open with a view to easing the pressure on the surrounding secondary schools (including Churchlands, Mt Lawley and the new City Beach SHS).

I totally agree. That letter was read in by the now Minister for Education and Training. She presented a solution that I had provided. I agree 100 per cent with what she read to this chamber. Now she has done a complete backflip.

Yes, we were going to do that—we were going to provide the City Beach school—and we did need an inner-city school. If we really think about it, we can see that we will need an inner-city school by 2028 or 2030, and a good option would be something along the lines of the option that we talked about with the Department of Education. It could even be located near the Department of Education building in East Perth, where there is a TAFE opposite and plenty of open space on the other side, but it should not be located on Yagan Square, right near the Perth nightclub district. That is certainly not what we or those parents wanted. This government has got it wrong.

Hon Sue Ellery went on and talked more about the parent group that was sitting in the public gallery. I had met with them and I had basically delivered for them, as I said. However, never on any occasion was any parent group that met with the current minister ever told anything about the multistorey building. I might add that there were plenty of opportunities. Three days before the election, a combination of groups, including the Perth Modernian Society, held a public forum at the North Perth Bowling Club. It was a very well-attended public forum. Hon Alison Xamon was there. Those parents were furious. They were really frustrated. At that stage it appeared from all the polling that my mob was going to get kicked out and the other side was going to come in, but there had been no consultation whatsoever. The only party not at the public forum was the Labor Party—the current government. Labor members were invited but they gave that group a two-fingered salute. They said, “We don’t need you”, because Perth Mod constituents are spread throughout the whole of Western Australia and so, politically, it did not really matter. The Labor Party did not need them. If the Labor Party felt so confident about its policy—do not forget this is the same policy that, according to the Premier

and the Minister for Education and Training, won it government—surely its members would have come along in their drapes and pearls and said, “This is wonderful. Give us our accolades for giving you such a wonderful policy. You’re going to vote for us in three days because of this wonderful policy. Let’s have a standing ovation.” They would not have got out of there alive because they knew what the parents would have done. They knew what the community felt about this issue. If they felt so confident about their policy, they should have turned up that night. That is arrogance. Remember, they had not even been elected and they were arrogant.

This issue is wrong on every single front as far as the government is concerned. We do not need it because the problem has already been solved, as I have explained quite extensively. There has been absolutely no consultation whatsoever on this policy. It is fundamentally flawed, educationally and politically. There is no pedagogical reason for it. As I have said, I have been in education my entire life. In some instances high-rise education in some cities is relevant, but it is not needed in Western Australia. We are not ready for it and we do not need it. Finally, absolutely no-one wants it. We have got over 6 500 signatures on a petition in a couple of weeks and I assure members that this issue is a sleeper. However, the ALP has form in this area. A former ALP Minister for Education and Training tried to inflict an ideological curriculum base on the Western Australian community called outcomes-based education. That OBE experiment failed dismally and pretty much cost that minister her job. I say this to the current minister: this could cost her her job. She will have to carry this legacy around her neck for the entire time that she is the Minister for Education and Training unless she eats a little bit of humble pie and backs down.

Members opposite do not have a mandate for this nonsense. I challenge them to look in the mirror and say to themselves, and believe it, “I have a mandate for this policy”, because they do not. I acknowledge that our government was on the nose, but it was certainly not the issue of Perth Modern School that cost us the election. Eminent Australians such as Bob Hawke, Malcolm McCusker and Janet Holmes à Court, who are very significant in the big picture, attended Perth Modern School. Every single child, teacher and administrator who has gone through that school is significant and has helped to develop the rich tapestry that is called academic excellence. They do not deserve to have the rug pulled from under their feet and beaten around their heads, having created that magnificent school. That is exactly what has happened. They are being ignored by an arrogant government.

Perth Mod is steeped in history, heritage, culture and excellence. I plead with the government to not destroy that unnecessarily. The government does not need to do this. There is a solution for the government. It can keep on giving everyone other than itself the two-fingered salute, but it does not need to do this. The government does not need this. I tell the government now that the rot has already set in. Its arrogance has been on stark display since 29 January and this matter will carry the government right through its entire term. I ask the Minister for Education and Training to please rethink this absurd policy or she will go down as the education minister who destroyed Perth Modern School.

**HON ALISON XAMON (North Metropolitan)** [2.57 pm]: I rise on behalf of the Greens to indicate that we will also be supporting this motion. I want to unpick a number of the elements that have got us here today. It is unfortunate that so many different issues have, effectively, been conflated into this one matter, which has raised the concerns of so many parents and students at Perth Modern School, as well as former students. I have received huge amounts of correspondence on this issue, despite being yet to receive my member of Parliament email address three days into my term. Therefore, I am letting parents who may be sending me emails know that I have not received my official email address yet. I am dreading when I finally do get my laptop and open it to see what is waiting for me. Regardless, I have been contacted by many people via the address that I had during the election campaign. The relocation of Perth Modern School has universally caused distress and despair. We should not understate the extent to which people are feeling that.

I also point out that I am starting to receive quite a bit of correspondence from people who are disappointed about the decision not to proceed with the reopening of City Beach high school. That is from another cohort of parents. Those people were excited that finally there was going to be a solution to that problem and now they are despairing about what is going to happen. Based on the correspondence I have received and the discussions I have had—as Hon Peter Collier pointed out, I was also at the meeting of concerned parents before the election—I do not believe that simply revealing the detail about what is going to occur with a new inner-city build will assuage the concerns of people currently attending Perth Mod. I think we need to find a way to pull out the various elements. The first element is reopening the City Beach school. The second element is whether we need a new inner-city high school that will cater for the people who are moving closer to and into the city. There is the issue about where Perth Modern School should be best placed. There is the issue of high-rise buildings, and I will suggest to this place that the Greens have a different position on high-rise buildings. There is also the broader issue about planning and how these decisions are made.

First, I will make some comments about the issue of consultation. I suggest, with respect, that the consultation that I would have expected on a decision as enormous as this, particularly with the impact on an existing school such as Perth Mod, has not been as I believe it needed to be or as I would have expected a government to conduct consultation. I am hearing claims from the government that it believes it has a mandate to proceed with the proposal it has now presented, but I suggest, with respect, that that is not the case. Consultation is more than simply announcing a proposal. Consultation is also about seeking feedback from affected stakeholders and being prepared to be open to changing that proposal into the future. I do not see any evidence that this has occurred, and I think that is why people are feeling so distressed. They are distressed not only about what has been proposed, but also because there was no input from people who will be directly affected by this decision. Simply publishing a policy on the Labor Party website is not consultation. It is really important that this government recognise that. I come into this place insisting that we engage in consultation on a whole range of issues. I said in this place on my second day back in Parliament that we need to look at genuine consultation around the Criminal Law (Mentally Impaired Accused) Act and the National Disability Insurance Scheme model. I say very clearly that if consultation on those two areas resembles anything like what is being attempted to be passed as consultation on this issue, the government will have a real problem on its hands, because there is no way that anyone can consider that to be genuine consultation.

I also note that in the correspondence that has managed to get through to me, despite the fact that I do not have my MP email address yet, I have received concerns from some parents within the Perth Mod community about the nature of this proposal. This is something that I have discussed with Hon Donna Faragher. The reason for that is that it is quite clear to me that a number of parent groups are trying to grapple with this decision. People desperately do not want their concerns to be seen as being party political. I know that some people who were involved with the massive petition that was tabled today have expressed concern and they want members in this place to be assured that a decision to bring on this motion was not intended to be party political. I suppose I was contacted because a number of parents believe that as I am in the Greens rather than in either the Liberal Party or the Labor Party, I can somehow broker through that. It is important to note that this issue is not being fought along party political lines; it is very heavily coming from just very concerned people.

I acknowledge the work of the Save Perth Modern School action group. It is working really hard to try to ensure that people listen to what it is saying. I understand that it is also planning a peaceful walk to Parliament tomorrow, so I look forward to having the opportunity to talk to more people then. I also acknowledge the work of the We Need a High School group, which has been tirelessly campaigning for a new high school in the western suburbs. It is obviously quite upset by this decision.

I believe the community has a clear expectation that Perth Modern School should remain in its current location and as an academically selective school. I feel very confident that that is the general perception of the community. Having said that, it is really disappointing that we cannot just leave Perth Mod as it is and still have a really important discussion about the need for an inner-city school, because, my goodness, we need it. We know that Perth Modern is renowned and that people take huge pride in the school's achievements. I very much agree with the comments of the Minister for Education and Training about the need to have more of these types of schools. I thought that that was a very important comment. Certainly, the Greens would support an expansion of options for students from around the metropolitan area and, indeed, from around the state to have access to similar sorts of schools. We hope that can be looked at at some point in the future.

Going back to how we got here in the first place, I want to be very plain: we do not believe that City Beach high school should have been closed in the first place. It was a poor decision. We believe the closure of the school in 2005 demonstrated a real lack of foresight and planning. This has been further aggravated by the closure of other western suburbs schools. The closures of Hollywood, Swanbourne and Scarborough senior high schools were also extraordinarily poor decisions. This happened under both Labor and Liberal governments and, of course, led to the situation that we have now in which schools are incredibly overcrowded. I certainly accept the comments by the Minister for Education and Training on the concerns about having high schools that are simply too large. We have a problem with overcrowding in our existing schools. The situation has become untenable, particularly for Shenton College, Churchlands Senior High School and Mount Lawley Senior High School. I also share the concerns of the parents of the children in those schools about what is going to happen. We need to understand that this will have a flow-on effect on decisions about what will happen.

I do not accept that we do not need a school in City Beach. That has been very much backed up by the commentary that I am hearing from people who live in that area. The Greens are of the view that a lot of planning has already gone into that. Too many schools were closed in that area and we should look at reopening at least one of them so that we can take some of the pressure off the other schools in the first instance.

I acknowledge that we need another inner-city school; there is no question about that. As someone who lives in the area and has had children and experienced that situation, I know it has been a real problem that the people

who live in the city have not had an appropriate public high school to which they can send their children because the catchments are such that the options are extremely limited. There is no question that we need to look at another inner-city school. However, I note that in the past other planning has occurred on where inner-city schools could potentially be built. One lot that comes to mind is the early planning that occurred around Claisebrook and setting up a school in conjunction with the TAFE.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.